

## Card tickets of the Worcester House of Industry

Murray Andrews

In a recent article on the *BNS Research Blog* Gary Oddie presented an important overview of a previously-overlooked series of private card tickets issued in c.1811.<sup>(1)</sup> Drawing from Lord Lauderdale's 1813 report into the state of the British currency, Oddie describes eleven varieties of card ticket issued at eight locations – Abergavenny, Bath, Bristol, Fakenham, Gloucester, Grimsby, Louth and Monmouth – in c.1811, which were variously tariffed at 15s. 0d., 10s. 0d., 5s. 0d., 2s. 6s., and 1s. 0d.. The purpose of this note is to add a twelfth variety to the list: a card 2s. 6d. ticket issued at Worcester in October 1811.

The sole reference to this ticket variety appears in a notice in the *Berrow's Worcester Journal*:

The Directors of our House of Industry are now issuing Card Tokens of 2s. 6d. each, a measure which is certainly calculated to accommodate the public in the present scarcity of small change.<sup>(2)</sup>

Designed by the London architect George Byfield and built in 1793-4, the House of Industry was an incorporated workhouse in Worcester's eastern suburbs, and by c.1800 housed more than 200 of the city's poor, orphaned, and widowed (Fig. 1).<sup>(3)</sup> Its directors in October 1811 were Messrs J.S. Ballard, J. Bennett, T. Holl, and J. Jones, who had been appointed at the institutions' Annual Meeting in June of the same year.<sup>(4)</sup> None of these four men were unfamiliar with the process of issuing tokens: in September 1811 they commissioned a series of silver shilling tokens for the House of Industry (Dalton type 1), and in November 1811 they would subsequently issue copper penny (Withers types 1240-59) and halfpenny (Withers types 1270-1) tokens for the same institution.<sup>(5)</sup>

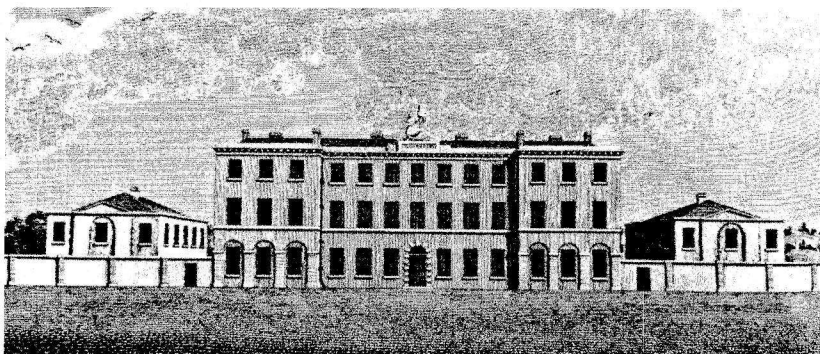


Fig 1: Engraving of the west front of the Worcester House of Industry (after Green 1796).

These other tokens were exchangeable for banknotes at the House of Industry's offices on Friar Street, Worcester, a liberty that probably also extended to the card ticket series.

The notice in the *Berrow's Worcester Journal* makes clear that the House of Industry's card tickets – and presumably, by extension, its contemporary silver and copper tokens – were intended to 'accommodate the public in the present scarcity of small change', a move in keeping with the institution's broader responsibilities towards the city's poor. From a local perspective, the institution was by far the best candidate for the job: as the sole claimant to Worcester's parochial poor rates, as well as a sizeable income from local property rents, the House of Industry had a relatively secure financial position, and was fully capable of bearing the upfront costs of ticket and token production and guaranteeing convertibility with official currency.<sup>(6)</sup> This unique blend of civic morality and economic viability helped ensure the acceptability of ticket and token use among city traders, more than 70 of whom resolved to refuse payment in 'local copper, tickets, or any other species of local tokens, except those issued by the House of Industry', alternative specie being rejected as unsecured and 'only serv[ing] the interest of the few individuals who may issue them'.<sup>(7)</sup>

No examples of the Worcester tickets are preserved in the Worcester City Museum and Art Gallery and Worcestershire Archives, and none have yet been traced in private collections.

### References

1. G. Oddie, 'An overlooked series of English card tickets c.1811', *British Numismatic Society Research Blog* (2021): <https://britnumsoc.files.wordpress.com/2021/10/208v2-card-tickets-oddie-blog-002.pdf>, accessed 16 January 2022.
2. *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 17 October 1811, p. 3.
3. V. Green, *The History and Antiquities of the City and Suburbs of Worcester. Vol. II* (London, 1796), pp. 12-14; F.M. Eden, *The State of the Poor: Volume III* (London, 1797), p. 809; R. Green, *A Brief History of Worcester* (Worcester, 1806), p. 46.
4. *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 25 July 1811, p. 3.
5. *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 19 September 1811, p. 3; 21 November 1811, p. 3.
6. R. Green, *A Brief History of Worcester* (Worcester, 1806), p. 59; J. Noake, *Worcester in Olden Times* (London, 1849), p. 84.
7. *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 21 November 1811, p. 3.